



# Conservation Compass

Joplin Area Outreach & Education



January  
February  
2010



"The place looks abandoned!" is a statement we've heard numerous times from visitors. They are concerned about how the "yard" looks between the parking lot and the nature center. The belief that a "yard" should look neat and well kept is the rule that most everyone lives by, and expects.

What visitors are seeing is a glade and prairie restoration. In the spring of 2008, the front lawn was planted and seeded with different species of grasses and forbs (wildflowers). These plants are native to the area and therefore attract native wildlife. Gone is the green, manicured monoculture of one or two non-native grass species. In its place, is a natural area resembling what the land looked like before human influence.

I have started labeling different plants with small, silver tags, to help visitors recognize these native species. Take a little hike through the front yard next time you're in Wildcat Park and check out what's blooming. If you're curious about a plant that isn't labeled, don't be afraid to drop in the Conservation office and ask. We also have free brochures about using native plants in your home landscaping (a practice called naturescaping).

## Look for these native plants when you visit Wildcat Park!

Indian Grass  
Aromatic Aster  
Black-eyed Susan  
Illinois Bundle Flower  
Ashy Sunflower  
Virginia Wild Rye

Randy Haas  
Private Land Conservationist  
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Our small restoration allows folks to experience the beauty of a glade and prairie while providing a habitat for wildlife. Twice, I've heard the distinct sound of a frog's distress call, and in both cases, they had been caught by a garter snake! Folks sometimes tell me the place looks "snakey", and they are correct! Even the unpopular critters are vital to a healthy habitat. The big, beautiful New England asters attract loads of butterflies. This fall I saw six monarchs, four skippers, and a dozen sulfurs swarm the purple planting. One summer day, while stuck inside behind a computer, I noticed a hummingbird outside my window. He was feasting on bright red cardinal flowers, competing with the insects for nectar. The native shrubs and grasses also help shelter and feed migrating animals during these winter months. It's good to see nature's life cycle working well within our small planting. Imagine what it would be like if others would "mess" up even a small portion of their yard for native plants and amphibians and insects and birds and mammals...Just imagine...

A "Messy Yard" for Wildlife

Photo by Cyndi Cogbill



# Badger's Burrow Forging a Conservation Community



Kevin Badgley  
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Specialist  
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Are you looking to discover more in the outdoors? Interested in the natural world and promoting conservation education and awareness? Then becoming a Missouri Master Naturalist may be your opportunity to engage in the stewardship of our communities' natural resources through science-based education and volunteer community service. The local Chert Glades Naturalists is a corps of volunteers who provide public education and community service aimed at promoting awareness and conservation in the Joplin area. The group is part of the Missouri Master Naturalist program, established in 2004 through a partnership of the Missouri Department of Conservation and University of Missouri Extension.

If you are interested in joining such a group, a new Master Naturalist training class will be offered this spring. This is a twelve-week class where participants receive 40+ hours of natural resource education, provided by biologists, professors, and chapter members in a variety of conservation topics. An orientation/interest meeting will be held January 25th at 6:00 pm at Walter Woods Conservation Area, just south of Joplin for all interested in the training class.



The training class is open to any adult who supports conservation efforts, who is motivated to learn about the natural resources in their community, and who wishes to share that knowledge with others. For more information about the Chert Glades Master Naturalist Chapter visit <http://www.chertgladesmn.org/> or call the Joplin Conservation Office at 417-629-3423.

## Forestry Focus Winter Is Best Time To Prune Trees



Jon Skinner  
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During winter, most of us are thinking about staying inside, and keeping warm. What many need to do is get out and prune their trees. This timing provides the most health benefits to the tree.

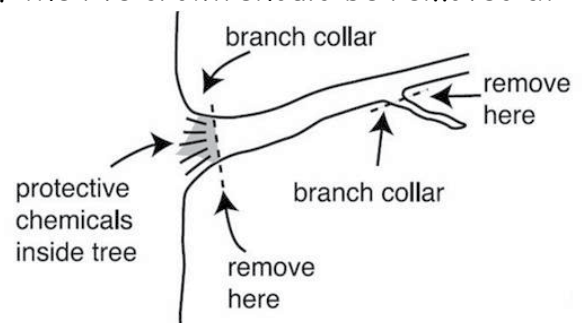
When a tree is pruned, it is wounded with a purpose. Similar to a surgeon cutting open the abdomen to remove an appendix. The pruning wound is an open injury that is exposed to infection from various pathogens. To heal, the tree must grow over the wound.

During the winter most of the pathogens of trees are dormant and not available to infect a fresh wound. A dry wound, one that is several weeks old, is also much harder to infect. To take advantage of this, winter is the time to prune.

Pruning should be done to remove dead, broken, injured, and defective limbs. Other reasons for pruning such as removing lower limbs for clearance should be done only after pruning for health reasons has been done. No more than one-fourth of the live crown should be removed at

any one time. If pruning removes more than this, the tree may not respond well. This could cause the tree to decline, or slow growth while it grows back enough leaves.

Proper pruning methods also involve making final cuts in the correct place. This creates the smallest wound the tree has to grow over. Pruning at the branch collar will accomplish this goal (see illustration).







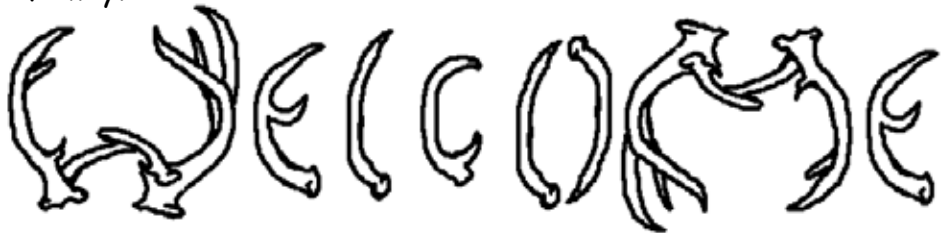
**Jerid Wilkinson**  
**Newton County**  
**Conservation Agent**  
**Jerid.Wilkinson@mdc.mo.gov**

## Moving Home to a New County

For most people, moving is never a fun proposition. Typically it means pulling up roots in an area that you are well established and it may even mean leaving family and friends behind. It means boxing up the whole house and packing it away to a new one, ugh. However, most of this was not the case for me.

My name is Jerid Wilkinson, your new Newton County Conservation Agent. While some of the things I mentioned above may be true for me and my family, this move was a chance to come back home. I am a native of Carthage, Missouri with strong family ties to the southwest part of the state so when the chance to move back arose, we were very excited. As I mentioned most of the woes that come with moving did not apply to us, we were moving closer to family. However, the packing and unpacking of our house was not one of the things we looked forward to, a minor inconvenience for the chance to move closer to family.

I have been in the central part of the state for more than ten years now, and was most recently living in Mexico, Missouri. I had been the Conservation Agent in Audrain



County for the previous three years. Before becoming a Conservation Agent I also served the Department as a Wildlife Resource Assistant for three years. I attended school at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri and graduated in 2001.

Carl Engelbrecht, your former Agent of 52 years will be hard to follow, but I hope to build the same strong ties with the community and individuals that he had. My duties as Conservation Agent for Newton County began October 1<sup>st</sup>. It may be strange to see a new face around the county, but I hope that we may work together to further your goals for conservation within the county.

As an agent our duties don't just include the enforcement of the Wildlife Code, however this is the main focus of our job. We also help with, and put on programs to help people understand what conservation practices can do for the resources in Missouri. We assist in teaching many school programs and Hunter Education programs to encourage our youth to get involved in the outdoors and conservation. We also work with local landowners to help them further their goals for conservation and game management on their own property through land management and food plot seed distribution.

As you can see being an agent can be a busy job. I look forward to working with you, whatever your interest in conservation. If you have any questions concerning the Wildlife Code, violations that may be occurring in your area, or just general information about conservation practices, feel free to contact me and I will do my best to assist you in any way. My phone number is (417)291-7819. I look forward to hearing from you and serving as your Newton County Conservation Agent for many years to come.





# Winter Events



Missouri Department of Conservation Joplin Office Program Registration

All programs are FREE and **require registration**; please contact the Joplin Conservation Office at **(417) 629-3423** to register. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so someone on a waiting list may attend.

## January

### **8 Friday, 4 pm, Short-Eared Owl Hike, All Ages, Wildcat Park**

Short-Eared Owls: Here for a limited time! Bring the family and dress for the weather as we search the prairie for these winter residents. We will meet at Wildcat Park and carpool (site to be determined).

### **18 Monday, 1 – 3:30 pm, Winter Ecology Hike, Families, Big Sugar Creek State Park**



Hiking isn't just for summer! Join us as we discover how animals interact with the winter world of Big Sugar Creek State Park near Pineville. Bundle up and come prepared for a 2 mile, strenuous hike in the Ozark Mountains.

### **23-24 Saturday, 9 am – 4pm, AND Sunday, 11am – 4pm, Eagle Days, All Ages, Springfield Conservation Nature Center**

Event includes live eagle programs, exhibits, activities, videos, guides with spotting scopes, and refreshments. No registration required. For more information please call (417) 888-4237.



### **25 Monday, 6 pm, Missouri Master Naturalists Orientation Meeting, Adults ages 18 and up, Walter Woods Conservation Area**

If you are interested in becoming a Master Naturalist, attend this meeting. You will be introduced to the organization and learn about the 12-week class to become a member.

## February

### **9 Tuesday, 6 – 8 pm, Got Flint: Woodsman Knowledge, All Ages, Walter Woods Conservation Area**

Who left that track? Are those bones? Join an experienced woodsman as we learn how to decipher the animal signs that are left behind.

### **18 Thursday, 6 – 7:30 pm, Introduction to Trout Fishing, Families, Walter Woods Conservation Area**

Have you ever wanted to go trout fishing, but didn't know what to use or where to go? We'll cover places to fish in southwest Missouri, what equipment and bait you need, and how to clean and cook your catch!



### **20 Saturday, 12 – 6pm, Vulture Venture, All Ages, Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery in Branson**



# Field Guide to Your Backyard



## For Rime And Good Reason Winter Is Here

The iconic symbol for winter is certainly the weather. There is no getting around it, however when we think of the season the words "snow, cold, ice, blustery, brisk ..." all come to mind. The decreased day length and bone chilling winds certainly are some of the main reasons it is many people's least favorite time of year.

This may be the reason why so many outdoor journals and books that address our outdoor world and natural events start their literature with the budding of green and opening of flowers in the spring. I propose those books should start with the dead of winter for that is what starts anew, an open canvas, a clean slate if you will.

It is a myth that winter is a time for rest for the wild creatures and plants of the Ozarks. There is a lot going on under the fencerow snowdrifts, in that tree bud, among those flying squirrels huddled in your bluebird box, and certainly in the game of survival for the white-tailed deer along your favorite Sunday drive.

Two of the most valuable reasons for winter regarding conservation are game management and what we will call the "reset" button. Biologists across the country try their best to manage different species of wildlife for healthy populations, but nature is the ultimate game manager. A harsh winter will test any species and assure that the most fit survives to pass on its favorable traits to the next generation. The "reset" button in simplest terms refers to the animals' and plants' ability to reset their biological clock to prepare to reproduce. Again, cold temperatures and short days are the key. Many seeds need

to go through a thaw and freeze sequence in order to germinate and many berries need to go through the same cycles in order to become edible for quail, songbirds, and many other birds. Berries that are not edible in the fall will become tasty to quail later on. This is a good example of how a cold winter distributes wildlife food throughout the season.

Like spring, this time of year has its shows of splendor. Probably the greatest winter showcase is one who's name few people know. They talk about it at school or work and make comments about "how beautiful it was this morning", "it looked like something out of a fairy tale", "my home looked like a winter ice palace" ... The name of this condition is "Rime". It is not frozen dew drops, but actual granular accumulation of fragile, crystalline ice on branches, dormant flowers, and exposed grasses - turning everyone's fields and front yards into a sugar-looking wonderland.



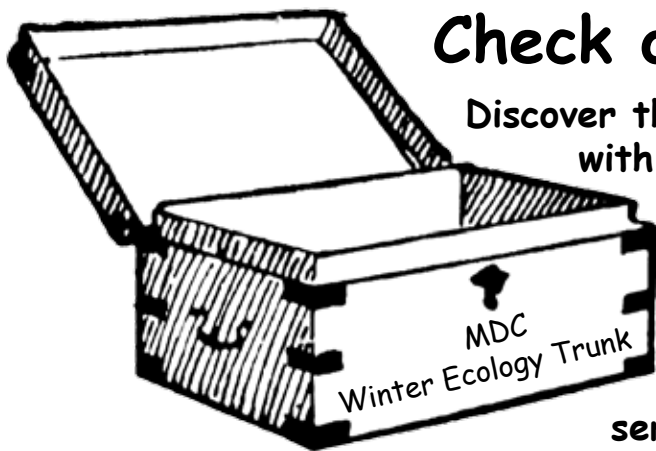
photo by Cyndi Cogbill

Winter wonderland, sheer beauty... the ultimate game manager and wildlife food distributor, winter is here for rime and good reason. And we naturalists enjoy every day of it.

Jeff Cantrell, Education Consultant,  
Jeff.Cantrell@mdc.mo.gov







## Check out a Trunk!

Discover the imprint of winter on student learning with our Winter Ecology Discovery trunk. This is just one of our many discovery trunks we loan educators. It is loaded with books and activities for outdoor adventure and learning. Educators may have the trunks for two weeks and the service is free.

## The **WILD** Side of Cooking Winter Camper's Ozark Crunch



### Ingredients:

6 tablespoons salted butter  
3 tablespoons wild honey  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup dark brown sugar  
1 teaspoon almond extract  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup dried cranberries

1 cup old-fashioned oats, lightly toasted  
1 cup quick oats, lightly toasted  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped, toasted black walnuts or pecans  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sweetened coconut  
1 egg white, beaten

Heat oven to 350°. Line a 9x9-inch baking pan with parchment paper, letting paper extend over sides. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine butter, honey, brown sugar, and almond extract and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add cranberries. In a large bowl, toss toasted oats and chopped walnuts, coconut, and egg white. Add in butter mixture until fully combined. Using a spatula, press mixture firmly and evenly into the pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool completely. Using paper, lift from pan onto cutting surface. Cut into 10 bars.



## Ask the Naturalist

by Amy Juhala

**Q:** Why should I feed wild birds in the winter and what should I feed them?

**A:** Maintaining a birdfeeder is an entertaining and relatively easy way to get to know Missouri birds. Backyard feeding stations are a lot like fast food restaurants. They provide quick energy for weary travelers and easy food for resourceful locals. But one cannot survive on fast food alone! So keep in mind, birds find most of their food from the wild and do not rely solely on feeders to survive. The real beneficiaries of bird feeding are people!

There is a wide variety of seed and feeders for sale on the market today. To get the most for your time and money decide which birds you want to attract and what will attract them. Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the widest variety of birds that eat seeds. Niger "thistle" is a small seed needing a special feeder. It is more expensive, but fewer species eat it; consequently, it lasts somewhat longer. Suet, made of animal fat, is a winter-time favorite for woodpeckers and chickadees. For more information, pick up our free brochure "Feeding Backyard Birds" at the Joplin Office.



# Conservation Kids



## An Owl Story

Jonas sat in the backseat asking questions, "It's almost dark; why are we here?"

His mother explained this is a special conservation area to look for short-eared owls.

"But there aren't any trees around," Jonas replied.

"You are correct, but these owls use prairies and marshes for their habitat. You learned about habitat in school, right?" his mother asked.

"Of course, food, water, shelter, and space, but where will the owls find that here?"

"This is a great habitat for them. Grasses create shelter and they roost on the ground. Voles, mouse-like animals, use this habitat and are a favorite prey. We might see a few birds to as many as twelve of them flying low to the ground searching for food," his mother answered.

"Wow, that is cool! But it's almost dark, I can't really see them," Jonas said.

"True. Look for medium-sized birds, close to the size of a crow, flapping their wings like a moth. These owls may be more easily seen in the daylight than other owls, so we can come back. You will hopefully see the brown, cream, and white feathers which provide excellent camouflage. Perhaps you'll spot the tiny, hard-to-see, ear-like feathers on the top of the head. Their true ears hide under beige-colored feathers on the facial disk. Short-eared owls also make a call somewhat like a barking dog, as well as hissing, squeaks, and hoos!"

**Join us for a Short-eared Owl Hike or stop by the Joplin office for more information. Learn more about owls and apply it to the Conservation Frontier's activities: 7, Nature Study Field trip: 37, Bird identification; and 67, Hawk and Owl Nest Boxes.**

-Cyndi Cogbill, Public Service Assistant,  
cyndi.cogbill@mdc.mo.gov

## MATCHING

Match the following owls with the correct call. Use a bird field guide to help you find the answers.

Great Horned Owl	"Who-cooks-for-you; who-cooks-for- you- all?"
Barn Owl	Sounds like a barking dog
Screech Owl	Harsh hissing and screeching
Barred Owl	Whinnies somewhat like a horse
Short-eared Owl	"Whoo-whoo-whoo"

## OWL CROSSWORD

### DOWN

- All birds have these
- Most owls hunt by \_\_\_\_ instead of sight
- The name for the sharp claws
- Hawks, eagles, owls, and falcons

### ACROSS

- Blend into the habitat
- Thrown-up fur, bones, & undigested food
- Fringed feathers for \_\_\_\_ flight
- Arrangement of feathers to aid hearing

	1			2															
5																			
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									6										
	7																		
8																			

\*Crossword puzzle answers found on page 3

# Help Us Spread The News!

The Conservation Compass is now available online and in full color! Less paper, less postage, same great newsletter! If you'd like to start receiving this newsletter by e-mail please call the Joplin Conservation Office at (417) 629-3423 or e-mail [Diana.Steele@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Diana.Steele@mdc.mo.gov)



## MDC Holiday Closings

Friday, January 1st  
Monday, January 18th  
Friday, February 12th  
Monday February 15th